

REMARKS

In view of the above amendments and following remarks, reconsideration of the rejections contained in the Office Action of July 13, 2007 is respectfully requested.

By the above amendments, claim 6 has been redrafted so as to incorporate the limitations, generally speaking, of prior dependent claim 8. This claim was directed to the additional feature of the side plates, and further language has been added beyond what was present in claim 8 to clarify this feature.

Turning to the description of the present invention contained at pages 9 and 10 of the substitute specification, and referring to Fig. 2, it can be seen that a higher pressure side plate 53 of annular shape and a lower pressure side plate 54 of annular shape are provided on the higher and lower pressure sides, respectively, of the thin plate assembly. It can also be seen that the thin plate assembly has both its side edges or sides formed with recesses 29a. Both the higher pressure side plate 53 and the lower pressure side plate 54 have respective stepped portions engaged with the respective recesses 29a on the higher pressure side and lower pressure side. As can be seen, the side plates 53 and 54 abut the thin plate assembly in the axial direction of the rotor. Further, the thin plate assembly is pinched or held together with the side plates 53 and 54 by the pair of thin plate retaining rings 51 and 52.

The above-described features have now been recited in independent claim 6 and in independent claim 16. The language with respect to the features discussed above is similar in both independent claims, though claim 16 is recited so as to be slightly broader in some respects. Both of these independent claims clearly distinguish over the prior art that has been cited by the Examiner.

In rejecting prior claim 8, which previously recited the side plate, the Examiner cited the Mech reference by itself. However, Mech does not disclose or suggest the side plates in combination with the other features of claims 6 and 16.

The Examiner cited Mech as disclosing the invention substantially as claimed in claim 6. In looking at the rejection of claim 6, Mech is considered by the Examiner to have thin plates 4, thin plate retaining rings 5a and 5b and a deviation preventing member 12. In addressing the additional limitations of claim 8, the Examiner states that Mech fails to explicitly disclose “the plates having

a side surface having a recess and the plate retaining rings having a step portion engagable with said recess.” This rejection is not entirely understood, as the Mech reference clearly fails to disclose any side plates whatsoever as recited in claims 6 or 16, or as previously recited in claim 8.

Both claims 6 and 16 require a plurality of thin plates forming a thin plate assembly; the pair of thin plate retaining rings; the deviation preventing member; and side plates provided on the higher pressure side and lower side of the thin plate assembly. If the Examiner is considering Mech to disclose thin plates 4, thin plate retaining rings 5a and 5b, deviation preventing member 12, then there are no side plates.

Indeed, there are in fact no such side plates as claimed in prior claim 8 or new claims 6 and 16 in Mech, much less side plates as specifically recited in both claims 6 and 16. With the present invention, the side plates that are provided on the higher pressure side and the lower pressure side of the thin plate assembly each have a side surface that is formed by the stepped portion that is engaged with the respective annular recess on the higher pressure side and lower pressure side. They are further required to abut the thin plate assembly in the axial direction of the rotor, and the thin plate assembly is pinched or held together with the side plates between the pair of thin plate retaining rings. No such structure is present in Mech or suggested by Mech.

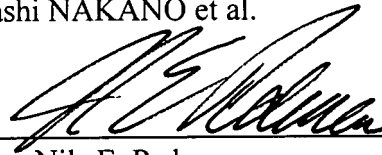
For the above reasons, it is submitted to be clear that all of the claims now pending in the present application clearly distinguish over Mech, and indication of such is respectfully requested.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is submitted that the present application is now in condition for allowance, and the Examiner is requested to pass the case to issue. If the Examiner should have any comments or suggestions to help speed the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is requested to contact Applicants' undersigned representative.

Respectfully submitted,

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